SB 262 SENATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT
EXHIBIT NO. 7
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BILL NO. SB 262

Good Afternoon, my name is Robert Carter and I am speaking on behalf of the ~~Target Range~~ Sewer and Water District.

The Target Range Sewer and Water District (TR S&WD) is a rural S&W District immediately adjacent to the city of Missoula. The District was initially created in 2000, and this past march it roughly quadrupled in size, passing with about 67% of voter approval.

This District is very unique in Montana. It does not have any actual sewage lines in the ground, nor does it supply drinking water to the residents within the district. The households within the district use wells for drinking water, and septic systems for waste water disposal. Naturally, one of the primary goals of the district is to protect the ground water that lies just beneath the surface.

Second, and probably more importantly, is that the district sets on top of the Missoula Aquifer System, which is, in essence, an enormous, shallow, water table flowing just below the surface, sometimes it is a mere 15 to 20 feet below ground.

It is largely due to this shallow aquifer system that voters approved the TR S&WD - in order to protect our ground water resource which lies just beneath our feet. (*Protect the Aquifer from what? There are several major threats to, but one of the biggest threats to any water system is by coming into contact with untreated human waste. And the threat of untreated waste comes largely from of something called a cesspool. A cesspool is essentially a large hole dug in the ground where all of the sewage from laundry water, dish washing, and toilet waste is discharged into. And these cesspools lie very close to the water table and have the potential for raw, untreated sewage to seep into the aquifer. The District has identified between 45 and 150 of these cesspools and one of its short term goals is to remove these cesspools. )*

Currently under MCA 7-13-2303 S&WDs have 2 options when making assessments for their funding. They may base their rates on the size of a parcel relative to the entire district size, or as a percentage of the taxable value of the parcel. Because the TR S&WD doesn't provide traditional services like other S&WD's, neither of these assessment methods fit. For example, in this type of district a 20 acre parcel with a single family home on it should not have to pay 20 times more than the 1 acre lot next to it that also contains a single family home.

In fairness to all of the residents of the district, we propose a third option: That assessments be based on the number of households per parcel, or more specifically the number of dwelling units per parcel, since our water resources are impacted by the number of dwelling units, not lot size, nor the land value. For example, a small apartment building with 4 apartments will generally generate 4 times more waste water than the single family home, even if that home is sitting on 20 acres.

Therefore, it is in the best interest of the residents within our district, and for future districts like this one, to come up with the very fair assessment method based on the number of dwelling units per property rather than assessments based upon size or value.

Thank you for your time, I would be happy to take any questions.